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THE
SECOND ANNUAL ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE
BELLES LETTRES AND UNION PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETIES OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE,

35

AT THEIR REQUEST,

IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH, IN CARLISLE,

ON TUESDAY EVENING THE 28TH DAY OF SEPT., 1827.

BY CHARLES F. MAYER, A. M.
Of Baltimore, Md., Member of the Belles Lettres Society.

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DICKINSON COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 27, 1827.

Dear Sir—The Belles Lettres and Union Philosophical Societies return you their thanks for the excellent Oration delivered before them last evening, and respectfully request a copy of it for publication.

With much respect, Sir, we remain yours, &c.

*John C. Jenkins,
Benjamin Patton, Jr.
John A. Gray,
James Vanhorn,
Baker J. Ross,
Augustus O. Hiester,*

} Committee.

ORATION.

I feel, gentlemen, that this hour is sacred to the cause of the mind. To unfold its contemplative beauties, to light up the rich area of this classical anniversary, is the office with which you have honoured me. In celebrating the majesty of intellect and the luminous victories of science, I have to perform a duty worthy of the most graceful talent; and it is at once a solemn and an elegant ministry thus to serve within the terse and peaceful precincts of the mind's domain. It is especially arduous, I might almost say ungenial, for me, summoned to it, as I have been, from the strict research, the solicitous toils, and keen collisions of Professional life. However refreshing to one wearied with the contentious realities and vigilant tactics of that life may be the scenery of the regions of thought and of taste, it is not easy for him to attune his mind for the homage the spectacle deserves; for it is the tendency of the Law's adamantine studies and elaborate detail to repress the Fancy's ethereal activity, and arrest the mind's excursiveness above the level of its stern pursuits. I come, nevertheless, to the functions which have been indulgently allotted me, as a tributary to a cherished authority, to offer upon the early theatre of my mental efforts and emulation the humble measure of my service. It is not for my powers to enamel any florid beauties upon the truth of the literary past and present. The occasion is, indeed, worthy of all that the mind in its energy, and the imagination in its votive harmonies, can invest it with; but that consummation belongs to some more ornamental minister of the period, who, with more epic feeling and richer unction, may exult amidst the bloom of Literature and in the spirit of aspiring Science.

Still we may admire with one another the healthful air and the soothing temperature, that reign in the Republic of Letters, and commune together on the literary eminences above the thrifty walks of business. We may mark the

culture that reflects its grateful charms from the scene and makes indeed the "Earth's great altar send up its silent praise"—and we may rejoice in the light of intelligence that falls upon it and the happiness that smiles over it.

I shall not offer you a studious rehearsal of the triumphs of Science, or the luxuriance of Literature, or propound didactic oracles for your improvement,—all I can aspire to is to elicit from the thoughtful genius of the occasion, and display in as fair proportions as I may, the sentiments with which it is imbued, and which are the common perceptions of us all, I have come but as the guest of your minds—to enjoy with you a hospitable intellectual communion—and that feast of reason which the occasion furnishes and to which my mind can contribute no luxuries of its own peculiar product.

It is pleasing to witness the unison of your societies in this celebration. They mingle here their common zeal and aspirations toward their high intelligent purpose, with no irritated rivalry, and with only a fervid emulation in the aim of rational excellence. The mind may well glow in such a career. That ardor, while it propels ambition, kindles genius to its illuminations, and raises the tone and awakens the energies of intellect. In such a temperature we may anticipate all the substantial fertility of mind and the fairest exuberance of imagination. The spirit of Science and Literature is unobtrusive and serene; but it is most pervading and efficient in the inspired warmth and hues of enthusiasm. Its reign is that of the golden age, and no bitter antipathies are admitted to its limits, or can endure the atmosphere of its territory. Within its borders, and breathing the same air of liberal feeling, dwell the two associations I have the honor to address, confederated in one deep and generous interest.

Literary genius has thus ever delighted in the climates of peace: in any other it but languidly exists. It flourishes not as the parasite of despotism—or to embroider the vanity of aristocracy; but only in the quiet shelter of order and virtue. And the spirit of science, irrepressible and diffusive as electricity itself, yet shuns the inflamed scenes of contention, and retreats rather to the humblest retirement to work out her stores.

For these truths, and only for that purpose, let us recur

to the days when the literature of Europe was immured in her convents, and scarcely threw a ray from its grave seclusion upon the dreary face of surrounding society—when all that field was overshadowed by the haughty towers, and convulsed with the turbulence, of feudal bravos—a race of titled ruffians, and chartered libertines, whose point of excellence was the most consummate tyranny, and the element of whose prowess was the darkness of the public mind. In the midst of this unhallowed tumult, science and learning could not venture forth, and the breath of Heaven reached them only when the distempered visions of the crusades and the enchantments of chivalry with its romantic but subduing vagaries fell upon the dull intellect and riotous spirits of the day. I will not, however, take up your time with the oft-told tale of the struggles of Learning, and its long hermitage, nor carry you thro' its cloistered passages or to its narrow cells where its light was not shed beyond the field of the monk's studious lamp;—nor to its oriental retreats, where in scholastic pomp it was more graciously entertained—nor to its asylum in the chill solitudes of Iceland. It is not now the peculiar possession of the recluse,—or sometimes perhaps of a prince who, (a generous anomaly,) departing from the fierce ideal of the age descended to the effeminacies of learning—or in a patronizing whim chose to favour the musing of some gifted or pedantic devotee—or the extravagances of some strolling rhapsodist.

Let us rejoice that no paltry tyranny of the middle ages, no dark baronial arrogance, now mars the social order and frowns upon our social harmonies, leaving the world to desolute ignorance and the wastes of riot.

A clearer sky is above us now, and the world glories in intellectual vigour. Learning has enthroned herself in the limits of civilized life; her sovereignty is adorned with all the charms of taste; her sway is chastened with all the sensibility of genius—the cordial influences of Literature. I need but mention Science and Literature as now expounded and ennobled to suggest at once their beautiful and varied panorama to your minds;—an array at once stupendous and benignant. Instead of a sepulchral seclusion—a light burning in those tombs of active life,—the monasteries of old,—we have learning in her graceful courts with her colonnades of taste, her fountains of salutary thought, her

light dispersing itself wide as human conception, her environs enticing with their fragrance and invigorating with their vital air the wayward or the dispirited,—her firmament the picture of omnipotence,—the banner of Heaven. Such indeed is the hallowed temple of reason,—the gradual growth of well regulated intelligence—not the shrine of spurious Philosophy and a recreant spirit of independence. We do not recognize that Philosophy which, blind to the confines of human reason, in its insurgent aim and infatuated flight mistakes the mysterious grandeur and remoteness of the Divinity for the darkness of chance. Then visions of lawless imagination fill up the void, and these in turn are deemed revelations of independent intellects and dictated as lessons of practical philosophy. But I will not dwell on these profanations of the rebellious mind, nor figure scenes which dared the Heavens, and a madness that sought to obliterate the Divinity.

It is indeed true that this age may exult in its superb scientific advancement. The spirit of the period is literary and scientific, especially in those countries, emphatically in this, where the liberty of the press circulates thought and solicits research;—where political freedom requires the paths of state to be ever lighted, that the seats and conduct of the servants of our power may be ever in view—and that the entrenchments of our political rights may be effectually preserved. The spirit of the period is scientific:—for its practical results are ever reaching the business and bosoms of men, as well as the high concernment of states.

Every day brings to your view, almost every movement of active life intimates to you, this bountiful, this imperial agency of science. Our whole economy has been fashioned and quickened by it, and it is the aid and discipline of all our industry.

It enriches and animates all those arts that tend to human comfort or aggrandizement;—from those that supply individual prosperity, or minister to private elegance, to those that sustain the schemes of empire;—from those that visit the fire-side, to those that serve the battle-field and enter the retinue of ambition. It braves the stormy pride of the Ocean—the rivers flow in its channels—the retired brooks are called to its purposes. The Earth and the Heavens are its tributaries.

Astronomy has searched the celestial secrets and detect-

ed worlds in the recesses of the universe, and brought down the stars to the service of earth and made them the auxiliaries of men.

Chemistry has explored the material world and given mankind the useful triumphs of analysis. It has pryed into the affections, and read the very heart of matter—its various alliances and elective tendencies, and, learning its repugnancies, it has reached the elemental forms of things so far as human reason may test material substances, or scan the texture of mysteries. Thus has chemistry gained a plastic authority over all the dispositions of matter, dictating its combinations to suit the fancies and enhance the comfort of men. It is the ally of Medicine, the universal agent of Manufactures, and organizing and instructing Agriculture, it charms from the earth a more fertile tribute and enlivens its empire with the bounteous green of plenty.

Geology and Mineralogy have told us, too, of the various constituents of our planet, and inferred from its rocky legends its strange vicissitudes—while chemistry has gone down into its deep bosom, to give sure light to those, who for profit or fame, grope through her silent domain, and ransack her sequestered treasury.

All the physical sciences have been growing in strength and wealth, and are endued with new faculties.

Mechanical philosophy has exemplified the transcendent power of human intellect, in rousing the inertness, and conquering the impediments, of the inanimate world.

By her progress we see in magnificent illustration that it is by the nerve of mind that the lever rises, and that the wheel but revolves with the resoluteness and urgency of intellect. The mind of man presides in the motions of the industrious mill, as in the impetuous energies of the Steamboat. Passing from the mind in its embodied life in mechanical philosophy, we shall see it no less pre-eminent in that field of its abstract glories, the range of Mathematical science. Here that science with severe simplicity, and the most intense analysis, denotes the enduring and impregnable force of mind.

It has been cultivated until its principles are so developed that problems apparently the most recondite are solved with little trouble beyond the enunciation of a few maxims;

and the mystery of quantities and numbers has been simplified to the perspicuous array of demonstration.

Political Economy the philosophy of national interest and the science of wealth, receives its frequent tributes in treatises of vigorous and original thought, and is referred to principles of practical purport, and illustrated and tested by practical results.

It is a science that, without any narrow spirit or sordid complexion, delivers to nations the precepts of the highest prudence and pecuniary polity, and provides them with a financial armament equivalent to martial genius and military array.

It is the contemplation of the most marked and essential effects of our social system, and the positive institutions of property, and society is reflected in its organized industry and in all its civilized machinery. It is the science of society in reference to the great rallying principles of interest and social strength and expediency; the burden of its exposition is the complex harmonies of the association of men; and its disquisition tends to the central and controlling principles and schemes that may regulate and enrich the collective interest of the community. Much space in this science has been occupied with the discussion of the force of terms and the effect of definitions. But their examinations are not merely verbal, although they regard the nomenclature of the subject, since the terms indicate and involve the cardinal principles of the study, and their consideration opens for debate the theories of wealth and financial wisdom. The science, however, in its more recent speculations, deals less with these controversies on terms, details operations and effects, and infers principles of sound prudential & lucrative policy. It is the associate of the moral science of Government;—and is emphatically the study for Republics, whose peculiar and consummate aim, & natural beauty, it is to unite efficiency with economy, and to whom profuse experiments in finance cannot be allowed. And it is grateful to find the study intently and profoundly pursued in this country, in the works of our Raymonds and Coopers; while we have the light of England in her Ricardos and M'Cullochs, and others, with genius worthy of a concern with the financial grandeur of that country, and the stupendous phenomena of British industry.

The science of duty, in Ethics, like the science of interest in Political Economy, has also been enlightened by the unsophisticated writings of more modern enquiries. Theorists in this sphere once raised their various standards of moral obligation, & patronized them with industrious argument and lavish illustration as the points of tendency of all our moral impulses, and the solidity of all our moral sentiment. To vindicate to one common, undisguised, and cogent principle all these standards, is the aim of our Moral Philosophy. And the result is to challenge the reasons against the rules of moral obligation, rather than to raise theories to enforce it, or erect sanctions to which, by the charm of ingenious logic, all moral action may be constrained to refer itself.

In the advancement of the Medical art, too, Science has given its guardian care to man. Medicine no longer deals in a blind catalogue of experimental or random appliances, but it stands organized under a luminous and comprehensive Philosophy. The reign of empiricism has passed away; the adventures of quackery are soon baffled; and the counterfeit interlopers in this hallowed science are industriously discovered and proscribed. The scope of Medical study has in various aspects been enlarged, and new auxiliary sciences have become essential accomplishments of the Physician. It is in a great degree the eminent honour of our modern times to have thus vindicated this beneficent science to its due dignity; to have thus entrenched an art appendant, it might almost be said, to divinity, and sharing the solemnity of the human destiny, against the mockery of magical artifices, and every species of preternatural deceit, and idle or reckless intermeddling.

Thus universally propitious has Learning been, and so magnificent is her opulence, in these periods; and thus grandly has science triumphed, as now exemplified in only a few chapters of her glory.

But let us retire now into the sublime dome of the mind herself, and take the index of our Intellectual Philosophers to the powers that there dwell, and mark the profound conference of mind with mind itself. The Philosophy of the mind, engaged with our supreme peculiarities—the points of our regal excellence—is pursued under a sense of their august nature, and to ends of substantial utility and beauti-

ful development. It is no longer a quest after fugitive mysteries, or a futile tracking of the thought to detect inaccessible essences that are hid in the depths of eternity, and consecrated in the awful intelligence of the Deity. It no longer leaves the solid data of experience and distinct unerring consciousness, to follow, on the honest premises of Berkeley, or the less pious errors of Hume, their speculative phantoms—leading into a world of ideality and flitting theories, where skepticism, with its bewildering apparitions, dissolves the material world into a mere phantasy; cheats the mind of its conscious existence, and the heart of a home, and banishes it to a desert. Our Intellectual Philosophy distinguishes between mere verbal forms and differences, and mental creations, movements, and affections: and, precise in its definition, and tenacious in its use of terms, it looks for the mind in the midst of her conceptions and as she there rules and glows. It regards the mind in its actual and useful economy, in its connexion with the material things and with an aspect toward them. It treats words but as the messengers of the intellect to the external world, and deems that the thoughts are therefore to be vested in material analogies and exhibited in a material mould. It does not look at the mind's abstractions as a sort of ethereal emanation from its intrinsic nature; an impalpable tissue of airy negatives, that no definition can embody; but it views the mind as the agent of powers of high, though mysterious, kindred; dealing in this world of sense with material objects, and not as the mere sanctuary of ideas chancing to be introduced into it in methodical and intelligent succession. In short, the Philosophy of the Mind, no longer a grave game of the fancy and a torture or seducer of the intellect, is but a system of intent and assiduous self-inquiry; an earnest survey, by the explicit tests of consciousness, of the intellectual scheme and habitudes and action. Noting the mind's various combinations and analysis, and the faculties that sustain its pursuits and obey its dictates as they come from the throne of will, it observes the impulses that press the mind to its aim, and its wakeful elasticity and its universal excursiveness.

Its tendency is ever to intimate "the secret moral of the mystic show;" and the height of its fair argument reaches Heaven itself. Seizing the imagination, alert and etu-

sive as she is, it presents her to us as the useful as well as decorative ally of stricter reason; figuring to that its conceptions; colouring the resolutions that reason sternly engraves; maintaining the flow and continuity of thought by the succession of her semblances. It does not represent reason as a sort of recluse faculty, prosaically bigotted and intent upon its surly drift of drudgery; but as moving with imagination ever in its train, active even though latent in her agency; having its progressive developments illuminated by her; and a scenic effect given by her to all its positions. In every operation of intellect exists this figurative agency; and the celestial faculty of which I speak mingles in all the conceptions and eliciting of the severest logician—however, in the apparent tenor of his mind, he may be the very antithesis of all that is imaginative. In imagination the intellectual Philosopher discerns the rapturous argument of immortality, the testimonial of divine descent, and in its vivid versatility and infinite picturings the sublimest analogies of eternity. It lights the star of hope; and at its benignant visitations visions of happy vicissitude dawn upon our hearts. It is not, however, in its tender offices as the alluring spirit of cheerfulness and consolation that we are taught to regard it with the deepest interest; but as it elates us above the pressure of cumbrous mortality, and ever opens the prison of reality, it seems to be the emblem of Divinity—a herald from the skies of a destiny beyond the frontiers of sense—connecting us in its ascension upon its high themes, with the asylum of perpetual quiet and untiring delight—encouraging and dignifying us with the assurance of our immortal consecration. Philosophy, as now mitigated, traces imagination through all these influences and verifies all these indications of which I have been speaking, dwelling on the fancy's spiritual power and ethereal creations, and seeing in its scope and supremacy the seraphic signet of Heaven. It marks, however, the guardian rights of reason over it, and the salutary discipline that must sober its attire and restrain its range. It does not hold it up for your admiration and delusion in its gorgeous sorcery; or with its fantastic plumage as a bird of Paradise; nor in its indolent dreamy sauntering; nor would it have you court the shades that it casts upon the human energies in morbid fantasies and scowling perversions and discontent.

But the Philosophy of mind views imagination and celebrates it as useful in its ennobled aspects, in its intellectual alliance, its cheering illustration, its embassies of hope and inspiration; while from the hallowed heights to which imagination carries us, Philosophy elicits the glorious inferences of our nature, and proudly claims the fancy's ministry as auxiliary of our reason and the missionary of heaven.

Memory, too, who in all her suggestions proclaims the triumph of mind over time, and in her temple of images spiritualizes all experience, and shows that our life is essentially intellectual, though not, as skeptics have it, ideal—is a wide theme for intellectual Philosophy. It exhibits memory as one of the dependancies of imagination; in the spectacles it invokes exercising a power akin to it, and, indeed, having imagination to confirm and vivify the scenes it awakens. By Philosophy memory is presented to us in all her varied recurrences, as the field of our sorrow where she opens her solemn receptacles; or as she leads us into her halls of regulated cheerfulness, gay hospitality and nimble wit; as she breathes around us the familiar air of our domestic life and fire-side comforts, though near the ruined hearth and amid our desolate reality; or as she revives the friends who have long lain in the tranquil depths of our hearts, and restores the sweet converse and buoyant activity now absorbed by the grave: or as she unveils the haunts of early days when the world lay before us in all its specious perspective, and keeping the scene yet bright with the joyous sun that won our youthful hours: or as she presents remorse in all its bitter life and rankling vigor still solicitously sustained by memory, and still struggling to escape the dungeon she knows full well to guard. Through scenes and alternations like these our modern intellectual Philosophy has occasion to mark the memory; to learn her power and argue her temperament and her relations, while it illustrates her high office and incessant agency in all the mental operations, all the deductions of judgment, and the efficiency of pure reason.

It is not with mere logical tenacity, and heartless abstraction, but with an edifying and a moral grace that Intellectual Philosophy explores and details our mental powers and peculiarities, shedding on the subject an endearing

unction. From this spirit of modern Philosophy it is, that we have the embellished logic and eloquent suavity of Stewart; the manly decomposition and lucid discursiveness of Reid; the decided diction and resistless analysis of Brown; all of whom, with the rich resources of erudition, have pursued their science without obsequious faith in previous systems, and full of the intrepidity of true Philosophical scrutiny.

Our intellectual Philosophy arrests, too, subtle & evanescent genius. It finds it to be no substantive endowment and to have no prerogative exemption from the rules of the ordinary faculties of the mind; but that in all its lightning glance, its prompt responsiveness, and brilliant rapidity, it is but an intellectual vigor quickened to a livelier measure, and an imagination more luminous and alert. It is not an intuitively transcendent faculty, a species of inspiration; but the regular action of the common mind in splendid vigilance and towering efficiency. The moral we thence educe is that vagrancy is neither the beauty, nor the worthy habit of genius, as is the abandoned idea so flattering to vanity and inertness, into which too many have been betrayed, who have the elastic aptitudes of genius. Irregularity is not its attribute, and no genial accompaniment; and its highest honors are not to be won in devious paths, and moods of remissness. Order is its appropriate law—its most useful sphere—its graceful vestment.

Let us then admire and cherish the Philosophy of the human mind as a system of self-knowledge; a revelation of our mental grandeur and real worth; tendering us the deepest enjoyments of thought and winning us to the most dignified ambition; while it instils the lesson of our infirmities and holds its lamp to the dangers that lurk in ourselves; to the engrossing power of habit; to the seductive vice of a sinister imagination; to the stupor and abjectness that await the neglected intellect. Duly noting the tendencies and the imperfection of our faculties, & appreciating their utility, it vindicates the cause of science, and the cultivation of all our powers to the tempered pleasures of reason and instructed fancy. It does not lament that the progress of education has given a limited monarchy to the imagination, and interdicted her riotous exuberancies; and with logical sobriety narrowed her excursions to the bounds of scientific decorum;

and in proper accordance with our mental advancement and social institutions, placed her under the more positive discipline of truth.

If imagination can no longer overshadow us with her superstitious mystery, and find her ominous phantasms in exhibitions which science now has approached and made the obedient examples of her own laws; if her stupendous enormities, her dazzling fallacies are no more; we have a happy equivalent in her chastened vigor, her temperate suggestions, impressive because they carry no defiance to reason and consistency; the solemn silence of her pathos; her sportive throng of fine wit and gay intelligence.

Amidst the gladness of cultivation we may well dispense with the frowning Scandinavian grandeur and the tedious splendor of oriental redundancies; and we have a surer and a deeper pleasure from the Italian charms, the velvet lawns, and roseate precision, of cultivated imagination, even with all the classical retrenchments it may have undergone.

Philosophy and the genius of our advanced science, inculcate the sense of the moral with that of the natural beauties; they shade the landscape with instructive thought, or augment its lustre with enlivening associations; thus making nature the text of mind; seeing in it the informing wisdom of a higher sphere as well as the resources of human improvement.

I have dwelt thus long, gentlemen, on this department of refined learning, because it seems to be more immediately related to those abstract exercises in which your societies delight; and as it holds the rank of a reigning power in the contemplation of all that science, and that wealth of learning, which the mind that is its subject has explored and created. With you it must be of direct and cardinal interest in your daily suit at the great shrine of thought—taught truly to look at your minds as the sources of all your advantages, the agents of all your future usefulness and legitimate renown.

It is not, gentlemen, merely in reference to the comforts of life, or the increased resources of society or of governments that I would extol the progress, and have you rejoice in the ascendancy of learning and science. But it is for their high moral effects, their exaltation of the tone and

industry of the public mind, that I would greet their march. So far as they inspire intellectual courage, energy of judgment, persevering inventiveness, and the ambition for the sovereignty of mind, and shed a thoughtful tranquility upon society, and sublimate the standard of justice; learning and science bless the earth and honor heaven. To instil and produce all this is their benignant consummation, however nobly even their sensible and immediate results may gladden and embellish humanity.

While science deals with her strict realities and learning notes her labors, governs her progress and supplies her materials, literature opens her recreations and hospitable bowers to the kindly taste, and purified sensibilities. Pacifying our perverse temperament with her balmy persuasion, her melodies elate the declining energies and excite the conscious dignity; her inviting verdure arrests us in the fervid course and dusty paths of business, assuaging us to thought and sympathy; her pensive dews and sunny haunts nourish and brighten the spirit of the morbid, the disappointed, and the sorrowing.

This period is most fruitful of literature, and boldly marked by the enterprize of talent.

It is not the beauties of a mere flower-garden—the mere horticulture of genius—that our literature presents; but it offers us a substantial product for grave edification, as well as its gay efflorescence to enliven our leisure. Every species of talent has its field and its incentive, and enjoys the munificent freedom of the literary republic. It is not the course of modern genius to luxuriate and waste its fragrance in solitude; but it may be said that the spirit of our times invites it to exhibit, diffuse, and record itself: and hence the varied and teeming contributions to our literary mass. It would be idle to say that all this coinage has the stamp of genius, or is the chastened “efflux divine” of salutary talent. In the productions of our motley intellect there is much of truant imagination, perverse conceit, and romantic froth, and every variety of strange obliquity. We have all the quaint diversities and affected phases of the literary creation, from the most shadowy fantasies and hideous majesty, to the primly sedate & scrupulously shorn illustration, with the due concord of sentences and syllables, to suit the balanced propriety of the style; and then a fu-

nereal procession of stalking ideas contrasted by another style of measured and emphatic gait, with its proportion of sententious condiments; and then we are aroused by the abrupt and startling, or quickened by the electric style, covering us with epigrammatic flashes.

We have, however, a vast proportion of writing signalized by strenuous thought and judicious research, and useful and exact discrimination; or vivid with the boldest conceptions, and captivating with the most terse and delightful originality.

There is indeed, abroad in the literature of the day, a self-sustaining style and reach of thought; a talent, that, while it reveres, as it is right they should be cherished, the works of Greek or Roman fame; yet looks, by the standard of that taste which those authorities sanction and illustrate, to its own resources; and revolts at servility to models, however they may be crowned with classical honors whenever they are held up as absolutely imperative, and enforced with a sort of monarchical rule upon the energies of the reason, or of the fancy.

The consecrated galleries of oft-quoted metaphors and classical imagery and sentiment, are not now again and again recurred to for the decorations of composition; but, leaving all the beautiful rhetorical sculpture of ancient or modern classics, and courting only the taste and spirit they elucidate, men choose to express their thoughts and diffuse the warmth of their themes, by pictures which their own living fancies raise, and by vigorous allusions fresh and peculiar. This originality is often affected and leads to remote and ambitious research to be novel; and the hard wrought fabric in the result, is as unwelcome as must be any elaborate singularity put in place of the spontaneous grace of nature. Sometimes this passion of originality bounds into the most vehement extravagancies; often arrays its dreary or its gaudy novelties and tinsel jewelry as the pageant of fancy's imperial enchantments; and often mistakes the most grotesque visions for the conceptions of melancholy sublimity. With all the deviousness, however, of this temperament, we cannot but value the independence it involves, that disclaims implicit subserviency to the precedents of earlier literature, and commends their cultivation only to regulate the liberties of our fancy; and thus imbued,

bids us rely upon our own views for the communication of our thoughts, sending us abroad into the natural and moral world for illustration and ornament. Thus prepared, it is thither we should go for the tissues of imagination, and not refer ourselves, as obsequious retainers of ancient or modern classics, to their repositories of fancy or of thought. It is better, sometimes, to be annoyed with insipid affectation; to bear the penalty of having all nature sometimes eclipsed by some imposing absurdity, and all taste sunk in a depth of novel horrors, than to have the alertness of the general mind daunted, and its powers levelled to tame correctness and timid research, and stunted diction, and to pall on the repetition of oft-spread literary repasts. The spirit of letters acknowledges no vassalage to precedents; no monopolies of excellence in any age or people.

To correct, too, the digressions of literary talent, and rebuke the inordinate inventiveness of literary aspirants and their false ideality, we have our wholesome Senate and Judiciary of Reviewers; with the powers of a concentrated sovereignty as keepers of the literary seals, and guardians of the credentials of the literary republic; and as the standard-bearers of taste asserting its dictates and keeping immaculate its statutes. They rally the intellect and challenge the genius and reflect the various mind of the country. Our United States can now boast two of these mirrors of the passing literature and science; one the converging point of our Northern lights, and the other catching the radiance of our Southern talent. Exercising as they do, an imperial sway in the literary sphere, it may be that undue sentiments are often indulged and a corrosive criticism and despotism denunciation. But these ungracious instances of surly rebuke are rare, and it cannot be denied that in this country, especially, it is of the first importance to our intellectual honour, (and thence in a great degree to our political dignity) that these literary folds should exist within which American intellect may be gathered. Open to all varieties of knowledge, each niche of science or letters is there attractive with all the enticements of honourable fame, and the assurance of the just regards and rewards of public opinion. They elicit the fruits of private study, and turn to a social good the researches that would otherwise have slept in obscurity, and embody useful thoughts that might

else have been lavished on the speculative retirement of the student. It is not only as mere censors or critical anatomists, or as holding the ensign of correct taste, that these literary marshals are useful; but chiefly so as they afford a home to our genius and its tributes, a repository to the toils of our intellectual labourers. It is not in ascertaining the equilibrium of styles, or the symmetry of sentences, or in scanning and weighing words, that reviewers now busy themselves; but the subject and all its riches and dependancies are explored, its elements developed, its various systems canvassed—and often its minutest principles and particulars abstracted and elucidated. A review being thus a discussion of the sense and merits of the subject, the writer must be imbued with its learning, invigorated with its spirit, and graced with all its accomplishments. It is true that sometimes, though seldom, pretenders, in the consequential attire of proficients, usurp in these works the functions of the endowed, and in a style of stately exposition, and with a varnished surface of wisdom and erudition, challenge respect by the authoritative frown of their strictures. But when this happens, these magisterial intruders are in turn put to the question, and themselves tested by the equal and infallible principles of taste and sounddisquisition.

It is, gentlemen, because the establishment of these literary tribunals in our country argues and substantiates our intellectual independence, that I have so much dwelt upon their influence and their dignity. They are the evidences of our literary emancipation as well as of our literary advancement—manifestos, and testimonials too, that we may of right sit in the Congress of the literary republic; that the taste and intellect of our country has not remained in the ruggedness of our early mountains; that we have lived for the cultivation of our minds as well as of our fields and our commerce. They show that the American mind no longer acknowledges Edinburgh or London as its seat of Government, or figures the intellectual throne of the literary realm in England or in Scotland. We need no longer delay welcoming our productions until they shall have been authenticated by the reluctant and gracious seal of English or Scotch approval. We throw off our colonial subserviency to a foreign literary stamp-act, and thinking and feeling for ourselves, we proclaim that as learning and taste

have no Royal way, so all men may assert the right of literary judgment, whose studies have yielded them the elegant knowledge and refined tact to relish the excellencies and detect the errors of literary productions. In our reviews, as on Capitoline eminences, we have erected these standards of independent opinion; and they preserve and embody that spirit of free judgment, and conscious mental power. While they are the registry of our learning, and the counsellors of our taste, these reviews are themselves the proof that letters have here been installed, and that we do not nourish our social prosperity and sustain our civil life merely from the resources of untutored sagacity and desultory shrewdness.

Keeping, too, before us the progressive science and literature of Europe, while our reviews remonstrate with foreign prejudice and maintain the integrity of our intellectual fame, they recount the proofs of foreign excellence and improve us with foreign contributions. And thus they rebuke and discourage that vanity which pre-eminent political privileges and rapid national advancement tend to infuse into communities so distinguished in these respects as ours is. Looking at our sudden and solid growth, and our conspicuous rank among the states of the world, we are too apt to ascribe our signal speed to sovereign genius; lifting us above, or making a breach through, the ordinary difficulties of social improvement and aggrandizement, and carrying us with a magical rapidity to our actual illustrious summit. This pernicious conceit of peculiar endowment has sometimes insinuated itself into our political views and sentiments, and conduces to bias us in our literary estimate of ourselves and others. It is a republican weakness; and we cannot expect to be entirely free from it. Its best correction is in the diffusion of sound knowledge, and, where extensive study otherwise is not practicable, in the expositions and contrasts which reviews present of the foreign intellect and our own. We shall thus be taught that it is to no peculiar native excellence, to no anticipating talent or forestalling genius, to no wider horizon of the American mind, that our sudden national stature is to be attributed; that it is only because the mind has here its free scope and liberal charter and the soul is not darkened by an imperious bigotry and locked up in any prescribed creed, and that politi-

cal power is but the force of the public will, and the concentration of the general opinion, that these states, upon a soil of such varied bounty, and long in the profitable calm of political peace, have reached so quickly so brilliant a dignity.

The human mind was formed to improve the elements that the material and social worlds present, and to enrich and enliven the probation we have to toil through. With an equal range, and an equally propitious view of Heaven, it will in all periods carry us to the same consummations; dispensing the same benefits and penetrating with the same intensity of purpose, and urging its achievements with the same lofty and unceasing impulse to the points of the same glorious industry.

While we have much to congratulate, rather than to praise ourselves for, we have much yet to acquire, which the populousness, wealth, and leisure of other countries have given them facilities for attaining, and that in this our laborious national youth we cannot be expected to have acquired. We keep parallel however, with the literary spirit of foreign countries. In them, as with us, diversified in character and object as are literary efforts, the adventurous zeal of letters is kept up by the busy effusion of mind. The world at large has its attention won to letters, and, occupied with the topic, learns to seek the resort for its leisure from curiosity or for instruction. And if many works appear, which are not models of immortality, the public taste under the admonitions of private or public criticism, soon gives them a becoming rank.

In no way can the general taste be purified, and the public feeling be worthily directed so effectually; as by engaging the imagination of the reading community, and making the fancy a mediator with the heart—to charm the sympathies from their indolence, and temper it to the sense of the virtuous and the useful. And this may indeed be said to be the age of ingenuous and lofty fancy, of interesting and impressive fiction.

While there abounds in all departments of literature, in the aspect of real life or serious speculation, a fund of beautiful descant and engaging narrative, Imagination in her novels and her poems has seldom been so active, to such agreeable and magnificent results.

It was with the pleasures of fancy that letters entered the world anew after their feudal suppression. The morning of literature broke to the melody of poetry; and the progress of letters has ever had its harmonious accompaniment. At first it issued in the gay dalliance, and voluptuous exuberance, suited to the gallant infatuation of the crusade, and to lull the rugged spirits of the age, and sustain the martial fascinations and the religious dreams of Palestine. Advancing with the learning and taste of the period, its genius was courted in those classical prototypes in which all taste was enshrined, and livid in its fresh enduring charms—authenticated as are those classical memorials, by unchanging principles of nature to every age, and the cherished tests and examples in every reign of taste. Not then, as before, did only scholastic disquisition assume, in pedantic fashion, the robes of verse; but poesy expatiated over all that was tender, and votive, and exulting. To our latter times the song of imagination has continued; and in these it has been prodigal of its harmony in all the orders of its nobility, the sublime aspiration—the superb action of dignified epic—tuneful lyrics—the gloomy grandeur and melancholy desultoriness and discontent of genius—gay wit and racy satire.

No one will say at this day, after poetry has illustrated so many departments of learning and taste, that its pleasures are proper only for the languid idler, or the effeminate votary of mere dainty literature. Its stirring appeals, its high incantations, the scenes it summons from the vast deep of imagination, the censure it kindles for the vices of men, and the stern satire it compounds for their frivolities, its cogent exhortation, its mellowing narratives and conquering solicitations, cannot but elate, improve, and rule every lover of tasteful delicacy and moral beauty. Much of wise views of man is invested in the amiable phrase of poetry, and truths of profound practical moment are wreathed with its agreeable allusions, and enforced in its solemn harmonies. Its symphonies seem suited to the beauties of the moral world, as well as they accord with those of nature; and it is by the charm of this association that the student dwells with delight on the supreme moral speculations that are the burden of poetry; on the pictures that throb with poetic pulsation, of the passions and the sorrows of men; his chiv-

alrous sacrifices; his extravagancies and his sufferings—on the unambitious retirement whose tranquil dignity and ingenuous content, poetry explores in its seclusion from the world's busy throng and interested strife.

Poetry is not the mere toy of intellect, to beguile our leisure with a trivial concord of sweet sounds, a spectacle of harmonious adjustment, and of the curious unison of sound and sense, worthy only to speed the perfume of obsequious flattery, or the fervour of amatory transports; but it is honoured as the language of a refined majesty; of the imagination in her purest tendencies—the voice of the heart in its charity and magnanimity—the impressive elegance of morals, and the sublime ornament of wisdom itself.

With all these engaging beauties literary pleasures have come largely in vogue, and are the habitual enjoyment of great portions of the civilized communities of our age. This country particularly seems destined to be enlisted most loyally in the train of literature. The manly liberty which we so peculiarly enjoy is the fit vehicle of letters, while they in turn temper and sustain our liberties. Man must be enticed within the orbit of peace, and lured to sedate sympathies, and the ever-monitory sense of right. The paths of social life must pass through scenes and be bordered with resources that engage his mind and involve his better feelings; or else he will soon range into the wilds of his selfish nature. It is only the palliative spirit of letters that can effectually mitigate the tumultuous propensities of men; and general intelligence and habitual reading compose the sure pledge of order in a republic.

By the pressure of despotic government it is true that a stupid calm, an arbitrary peace, may be obtained; but the pressure must be unabated and cruelty must watch it; and often the effervescence of nature, independence, is active under the iron weight, and explodes the best forged schemes of despotic rule.

It is only where the public mind is captivated by the high considerations of the social weal; where its opinions assist in the adjustments of right and power, of ascendancy and submissiveness; that the fruitful peace of a community is ensured. But the tone of that public mind must be mellowed to gentle aims; the public intellect must be trained to haunts of useful occupation, before it can be won to

the enactments of social order. To engage the attention is the essential preliminary to the improvement of the feelings, and to allure the thought to innocent themes is the only recourse for dislodging seditious passions. If we attain but the negative effect of excluding unworthy resolutions and vicious conceptions from the mass of the world, we should be pleased with the consummation; but knowledge diffused, the mind habitually filled with objects for reflection or for its industry, and with pacific images, leads to positive enjoyment and useful products. It is the nature of contemplation itself to fertilize as well as tranquilize the intellect; and of even the faintest instruction to nurture the faculties and enamour the mind of the pursuit.

In a republican government, however, it is not enough to estrange the public thought from inordinate objects, and decoy or divert the public taste from inflamed indulgences; but the mind must actively deal with healthful labours, and have its riches increased, its capacities enlarged and quickened, and the sensibilities must turn to objects of positive, energetic excellence. It is the instructed, the assenting mind of the people that is the safeguard of the republic, the life of its power.

It is idle to proclaim mere hollow abstract political equality; the boast is a pernicious delusion—a mere theoretical grace over actual licentiousness and coarse arrogance and obtrusiveness. We must have more than that measure of equality to make our liberty either useful or glorious, or our republic perpetual. Without that which may ensure to us our civil liberty—the essential end of all political liberty—political liberty is but a noisy privilege and a specious idea. Such is the dominant tendency of talent, the imposing strength of knowledge, that where intelligence is not distributed with proportional equality, and the mind of the mass of the people is in dark contrast with that of the few in authority or without it; there must be anarchy and finally debased servility in the ranks of the ignorant. Such must be the inevitable case of a community having political power to administer; national interests and national operations to observe; and momentous civil privileges under their direct guardianship. In such a condition of things, intellectual superiority instigated to schemes of august wickedness, employing either the deceitful splendour

of military success, or the eloquence of seductive sophistry, and the pomp and art of diplomacy, seeks, not the innocent crown of mental honours, but political dominion and the prerogative of oppression.

Hence the varied annals, I had almost said diaries, of ancient republics; embarked as they all were on a fluctuating fate, upon the fitful temperament, the riotous caprices of an ignorant multitude. These republics hovered on the uncertain wave—now in the calm of their civic lustre—and then driven in the implacable tempest of public passion. Look to those periods for the power of mind; and to the sceptre of intellect as it departed from one to another class of philosophers; and as alternate theories gained the blind applause, and provoked the factious zeal of the people. These were not factions lighted with the empyreal flame; but the very influence of these men of mind, the royal pre-eminence they swayed, shows the inferiority of the obsequious and tractable crowd.

This may argue the majesty of mind; but it indicates the obscurity of the intellect that could yield such abject deference, and be so humbly flexible, to the humours of those artists of theories; no matter whether of substantial wisdom, or of painted sophistry and sententious conceits. It is not, therefore, to be understood, that when antiquity is extolled for its exemplary intellect—that the people of antiquity may share in the eulogy. It is not thus with our republic and our people. The value of our liberty was measured and signalized in the grievances that led our early pilgrims to the sullen solitudes of the unconquered wilderness; and prompted them, even for such a refuge, to yield themselves to the dark perils of their wayfaring; but they were urged by the free winds of the sea, and the dreary spirit of the storm accorded with the genius of their own gloomy energies. The necessities of early settlements with rigorous impulse, excited invention and gave action to the mind; the tenets of old English wisdom were treasured to advance social order and personal dignity; while the sober joys of the native fire-side consecrated by early recollection brightened the bleak retreat of the stern worshippers of freedom. The scenery around them was the memorial of their vicissitudes, the image of their quiet liberty, the tablet of their political attainments; and the exhortation to value

them. Thus trained to freedom, and observant of its rights, this country was ready for the sovereign independence it achieved; and which we cherish for the noble principles that incited the pursuit, and that adorned the banner of the contest. But there is no genuine efficacious republicanism without universal education; and the informed and tempered and tenacious sense of our rights—the equable distribution of intellectual power. With such qualification, the American people will stand endued with a celestial armoury; their liberty will have a guaranty as indissoluble as mind itself. They need then fear no insidious mining of their privileges; and military power, with all her Pretorian guards, her victorious plumage, and ostentatious blandishments, shall neither over-awe nor seduce them while they have their minds as their entrenchments; and their wary sense of their dignity for the sanctuary of their liberty. With a diffusive intelligence regulating, invigorating, warming, and exalting all—then and then only, does a permanent and harmonious equality and a cordial and infallible republicanism exist.

It is not among the least of their auspicious results, that diffused knowledge and general habit of thinking, tend to keep to wholesome principles the standard of eminence in social life. In communities thus rectified, and alive to all undue assumption of either social or political ascendancy, the aristocracy of wealth cannot raise itself to its arrogant pedestal; and “the proud man’s contumely” is reciprocated with the dauntless ridicule and intrepid scorn that soon drives it back to the retreat of its paltry spirit.

In a country where political inequality is unknown, and where the only inequality of obvious note and sorest pressure, is that of fortune; private interest inclines individuals to a subduing deference to wealth; and pecuniary resources inflate the successful few who wear the order of the pecuniary star. Without any of the traditionary graces and the artificial brightness of lineage that attend and content aristocracy of birth; the aristocracy of wealth is more baleful, because it sedulously aims at an engrossing prominence in civil life, its presumptuous summit and only hope of distinction, and seeks to bribe the independence of the public mind by the fascinating coinage of interest and the mere metallic virtues of its condition. When that independence

is once gone, and the golden calf has established its worship, republics may tremble for their privileges and faculties; and they tremble in weakness and despair.

What began in puny ambition and frivolous arrogance ends in political relaxation; and in the fatal though gradual lapse of civil and political liberty.

But let us contemplate the prevalence of knowledge, and the reign of intellect, in a relation of sacred force and profound utility. When the public mind is thus enlightened, religious liberty in celestial expansion, in its most effective sense, descends upon a community. Then is announced the principle, cheered and hallowed with the smile of Heaven, that it is impious to torture the souls and wound the hearts of men to engraft upon their minds a particular creed; but that the feelings are to be composed to contemplation, and the intellect left to be refined by knowledge, and to know Heaven as Heaven shall then, lighted with all its revelations, reflect itself into the soul. I speak not of the concession of a mere legal toleration, but of the liberality which disposes individuals to defer to the holy rights of religious judgment, and presumes not to intrude on the communion, in the soul's seclusion, between God and man; which acknowledges the Omnipotent as the mind's sole sovereign—the avenger of his indignities—and does not therefore allow trivial man to come a halting supplement in aid of the Divinity's vindication. It is not enough that the infamous fires of a Smithfield are quenched; that the ashes of its martyrs have long been cold; that the law has framed no rack to agonize the human nerves and break down the human judgment; but there is a jealous and provoking malignity; a rancorous love of authority, that convert the human heart into a hall of torture and a den of bitter vengeance, for the dissentients in religion from ourselves; which transfuses its poison surely, though in groveling silence, into all our concerns and relations with those who cannot goad their judgments into compulsive accord with our own. It is this persecution, insidious, vigilant and pervading, that embitters the heart that entertains it; and is scarcely less injurious for being unarmed with political sanctions; for such a spirit seeks the opportunity of religious monopoly, and glories in the prospect of having the license of its tyranny written in characters of insatiate hatred.

It is only education, of generous and luminous scope, that can subdue this inquisitorial pride of opinion, and avert such profane usurpation of the royalties of Heaven for the insignificant interests of human passion.

Then it is indeed fit, gentlemen, that in the religious light of these holy walls, we should celebrate the excellencies of literature and all her mitigating power; and place the pure structure of refined republicanism under the auspices of Heaven itself. It is the pride of legitimate learning to bring the pursuits of literary taste into persuasion and confirming concord with the corollaries of morals and the injunctions of religion. And religion no longer folded in reverend austerity and mysterious enigmas, and fostering ecclesiastical tyranny in saintly dogmas, shows in moral colouring and rational transparency the truth of her messages, and seals them with the convictions of judgment.

In your condition, gentlemen, you have the rich concurrence of all those resources and all that utility, and beauty and delight of which I ventured my desultory rehearsal. To you is signally given the proud privilege of intellectual improvement—the opportunity of intellectual sway. According to peculiarities of talent or the force of circumstances, you have various destinations in the lights and shadows of the practical world; but in whatever departments of active life it may be your fortunes to serve the science and literature of which you have acquired the elementary views in these tranquil academic retirements, will ever aid your toils and ennoble your progress.

It is an idle notion on which men rest in their inert compromise with their sense of duty that the devoted study of the science of their particular profession is all that is abstractly required of them, without regard to collateral accomplishments or illustrative pursuits. We may, indeed, by that plan become safe and laborious adepts within the narrow bounds of our vocation and for its microscopic minutiae; but we cannot thus advance the authoritative influence of our science, or the useful dignity of our profession and its exalted efficiency. We may deserve the iron crown of drudges; but the world will find little in our labours for praise, and nothing for the claims of ambition, or the starry honours of the tomb. Knowledge in all its divisions, literature in all its refreshing and elegant miscellany, should

be ever your fond and habitual pursuits. I will not detain you by any exhortation in the cause of ancient classical literature, daily so cogently inculcated, and, in its peculiar department, so eloquently exemplified to you, its utility and imperative claims on your minds make a fixed article of your literary faith. It is of no importance to show why it is, or weaken our admiration by skeptical queries why it should so specially be, that ancient classical literature presents us these unimpeachable models of taste, as well as a treasury of excellencies of various thought and tersest gaicties. As exemplars of dense and sententious diction and concentrated brilliancy as well as of melodious fluency and of excursive and heroic majesty, the pre-eminence of these works is established by the tasteful suffrage of every succession of literary votaries, and is every day reflected in the mental victories or embellished pageant of all who are militant in the field of argument or of fancy. They are not therefore, obsolete memorials worthy only of pedantic deliverers; but transcripts of mind that have their honours yet fresh upon them and a radiance never to be extinguished.

I will now disengage you, gentlemen, from the durance in which my rambling remarks have so long held you. A world of contingencies, and a field of intellect is before you—resources that spread their wealth and charms to a pure moral day, solicit your minds. Use them with all the zeal of intelligence. Remember that the purified liberties of our republic are consecrated not only by theoretical sanctions of convenience, but by principles morally imperative and religiously sublime: that the excellencies of a good citizen involve the improved mind and the charities of the soul as well as the care of the social interest and the quick sense of political rights; and that your most honourable fame will be that which shall adorn the wise and beneficent tablets of your lives and the virtuous rest of your graves.

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